

SESSION 10 - FERRIES

CHAIR

Richard Lolich, Maritime
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TITLE OF PRESENTATIONS AND SPEAKERS

“Vessel Wake and Other Issues Facing
Ferry Operators” by James Bamberger,
Maritime Institute of Technology

“Challenge and Opportunities in
Financing Ferry Boats and Operations”
by Clayton Cook, Management and
Transportation Associates

“Ferry Vessel Design Which Creates
Little or No Wake” by Bill Burns,
Mangia Onda Company

“Pre and Post September 11th
Impact/Importance of Ferry
Transportation in the New York Area
and Technological Needs from the
Customer’s View” by Roberta
Weisbrod, Partnership for Sustainable
Ports

SUMMARY

The Role of Ferry Transportation.

There are about 225 ferry operators in the U.S., serving 487 routes with 677 vessels. Each year more than 113 million passengers and 32 million vehicles are carried by these ferries. In fact, ferries carry more than four times as many passengers annually than AMTRAK. It is interesting to note that ferries serve 43 states and territories of the U.S. These ferry operators serve a variety of markets. Some are major

components of the metropolitan transportation systems in places like Boston, New York, San Francisco and Seattle. Some provide essential links to the many islands along the East and West Coasts as well as on the Great Lakes or the Gulf Coast. Others provide vital links on low volume roads in rural areas that cannot justify the expense of a new bridge or tunnel based on their traffic volumes.

Four of the most congested metropolitan areas in the country have extensive ferry operations that could be expanded. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the U.S. and a significant number of sites served by ferries are places that people like to visit. A good example is the 55 routes that serve various elements of our National Park system.

Ferries have also provided a vital role during natural disasters. When the Loma Prieta earthquake struck San Francisco and shut down the Oakland Bay Bridge, ferries provided a critical service linking East Bay communities to San Francisco. North Carolina also relies on ferries to evacuate residents on coastal islands during the hurricane alerts. Everyone is also familiar with the massive evacuation role which the New York area ferries played on September 11, 2001 and afterward. Without these ferry services, there may well have been many more injuries and lives lost.

The Problem of Congestion.

As the traditional surface transportation modes (rail and highway) become increasingly congested, they will be challenged in meeting the transportation needs of a growing U.S. economy or of sustaining the international trade vital to that growth. Left unchecked, increasing

congestion on our highway and rail networks will lead to spreading gridlock and ultimately to economic stagnation (if not meltdown). Symptoms of these problems are with us today, from accidents that tie up local interstates for hours, to major events such as occurred in the Houston area following the UP-SP merger.

Both intercity and metropolitan ferry operations can help alleviate this congestion. There are several major transportation/population corridors which also have parallel water routes that could be exploited or expanded to accommodate some of that additional congestion. Among them are the San Francisco Bay, Buffalo-Cleveland, Cleveland - Detroit, Buffalo - Rochester, Chicago - Milwaukee, Southern Connecticut - New York City, and Mobile, Alabama - New Orleans - Houston. These routes are not being used at capacity and could provide an overall low cost transportation alternative to the congested roads and rails in those areas.

Many of our existing ferry terminals are located within our largest and busiest ports, where ferries compete with large containerships and bulk carriers for waterway access. In those ports where there must be closer coordination between the cargo and passenger carriers as well as the port authorities to ensure that the passenger segment (ferries) employs adequate security measures throughout their operations. At the smaller terminals, where there may not be a port authority or other public agency, appropriate security measures need to be developed to assist the operators.

Some of the critical security ferry issues that need to be addressed are:

- How to adequately screen the more than 113 million passengers carried on ferries each year
- How to properly inspect the more than 32 million vehicles carried on ferries each year - vehicles carrying a wide variety of fuel types
- How to coordinate security measures with the ferry operators and the local port authorities

Potential Barriers

There are a number of issues that could impede new or expanded ferry services. Among them is the difficulty encountered in trying to build new terminals. Local opposition to new terminal sites usually focuses on the traffic impact associated with passengers arriving at the terminal by car. Another problem in siting terminals is that the availability of new sites for terminals is becoming increasingly limited as the waterfronts are redeveloped and the cost of those sites that are available is rapidly rising.

One of the biggest issues is funding. Ferries are supported by both public and private funds. Of the approximately 225 operators, only about 89 receive public funds from either the federal, state or local governments or from a combination of the three. Although there are more federal funds available now than prior to TEA-21, operators cite a number of difficulties in accessing these funds. Projects must first be on an approved state or metropolitan plan and program. Aside from the Ferryboat

Discretionary Program, ferry projects must compete with other transportation needs for available funds. Some operators are not familiar with these ongoing planning processes and as a result they are unlikely to be as successful as other players.

Ferry transportation is a vital component of our Marine Transportation System, and must be integrated into the Nation's overall transportation planning process. Faster vessels and propulsion systems which produce lower air emissions must be built. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta recently stated that "Ferries reduce passenger and freight congestion." We must ensure that they continue to play that very important role in our Nation's transportation system.